Snakebite

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by KissTheCannibal

Summary

Shattered by the death of his father, Adam has a meltdown on his kitchen floor and inadvertently summons something sinister in his distress. Nigel has no clue what to make of this feeble boy, or what he's doing in a pristine New York apartment.

Notes

Inspired by a post on Tumblr
Unbetad OH LAWD

See the end of the work for more notes

For a long while, he could only hear the thundering of his blood. His heart felt as if it was about to leap straight from his chest. Terror ran hot and cold just beneath the skin and his body trembled for it. Adam had tried counting, tried breathing, tried rocking, but nothing soothed. That was, until, he felt himself uncoiling silently. The sound of his racing pulse had been replaced by a consistent, rhythmic sizzle, like water on a hot plate or rain against the pavement. He found that by focusing on it, the chaos that was raging his skull receded and his heart took on a dull thud in its bone cage. He was still seated, knees drawn slightly towards his chest, but his hands weren't shaking any longer. Opening his eyes felt like a blessing until it wasn't. It was a shock, but not enough to send him spiraling immediately.

Dazed, he blinked several times to see if the image would leave him in peace. A viper stared unblinking at him, its triangular head a meter away and frozen while its body undulated behind it. He recognized the species. *Echis carinatus*, the saw-scaled viper. He'd seen it once before on a school trip to the local zoo. It wasn't a memory he held onto too fondly, but knowing what he was looking at helped in a way. He remembered the creature being small. This one was as big as an anaconda. It was taking on its unique defensive stance, thousands of serrated scales moving together to create something akin to a hiss. Adam was mesmerized by the churning patterns of grey, black, and white. A fleshy tongue darted at him and snapped him from his lapse.

He was pinned in place by a pair of shining, gunmetal grey eyes split by the narrowest slivers of black. It hit him then that the viper hadn't struck at him once, despite the clear irritation. For a moment, his frazzled brain made the urgent plea for escape. He could see nothing but a world of smoke from his periphery. They were surrounded by it. *Echis* seemed particularly unbothered by the setting. It never took that terrible gaze away from him. In a moment of stark clarity, Adam realized that it was waiting. For what was an entire question of its own.

He licked his lips and straightened his shoulders. "Who are you?" came from his aching throat.

"I'm Nigel, who the *fuck* are you?"

The voice was distinctly male, accented, and ricocheted inside his skull. The serpent churned hard in time with it. Adam's breath was stuck in his throat as he forced a swallow.

Nigel was rapidly losing patience and Adam could feel his anger prickle on his skin like the charged air before a lightning storm.

"A- Adam," he managed before fear could steal his tongue. His body froze up when the viper deviated from its hypnotizing twists to inch towards him. The head was raised higher and Adam could see the smooth, white underbelly.

"Can you, by any chance, tell me why the fuck I'm here, Adam? Why have you sent for me?"

"I didn't," he blurted in his own defense. It sounded like an accusation and the sizzle of scales he got in reply sounded disbelieving somehow. He fisted his hands in the front of his

khakis and stayed put. “I’ve never met a Nigel. I don’t even know what you are. At least, I’m not sure…”

He sniffed once and was treated to another curious flicker of tongue.

“What is it that you want, then?”

“What I want…?” Blue eyes glittered like jewels.

“You’re fucking desperate to have brought me here by accident. You want something. What is it?”

Pink lips thinned with the effort it took to focus on answering. It wasn’t easy to think with a very angry, very venomous reptile hovering a short distance away. It dawned on him and brought warmth to his already blotchy cheeks. “I want a friend.” The statement sounded a little silly to his own ears, but it was the honest truth. The viper drew back in its own surprise and took on the same stance as before. Now the sound was harsh on Adam’s ears. He met Nigel’s stare with one of his own. The slits of his eyes widened a fraction before narrowing skeptically.

“A friend?” It echoed in the back of his head. The snake was easing closer as it spoke to him. “You could tell me to do fucking anything at all, and I’d do it. I could kill, maim, and destroy with a simple instruction. And you want me to be your friend?”

“I don’t lie. I hate liars. You would be my friend, if I asked?” There was a glint to those blue eyes that put an icy fear in his coldblooded heart.

“You don’t want me as a friend, Adam.”

The young man watched as those grey eyes flashed a warmer shade of amber and bronze. Adam suddenly wanted to touch those keeled scales. “You can’t know that for sure,” he replied softly. He was reaching out now, palm up. It was an invitation, a request for permission.

“Naïve boy.”

“Be my friend, Nigel.” His smile was small, hesitant.

The snake bit into his palm.

It was faster than Adam’s ability to track it and had struck without warning. He was too shocked to scream, but he did feel the hot tears spill over as pain exploded in his hand. The fingers of his caught appendage twitched feebly as Nigel held on to him. It was excruciating, the worst pain he’d ever felt, like thousands of needles being shoved through his skin. He could only stare for a moment longer before the pain blinded him completely.

“You’re doing so well for me, Adam.”

It was a purr that he could hear through the roar.

“I can practically taste you now.”

Unconsciousness closed in on him like a blanket.

He was still cradling his hand to his chest when he came to. It throbbed with a dull ache, though he couldn’t see any blood.

He was crumpled on the kitchen tile. Home again. Through the floating specks of darkness still clouding his vision, he could make out two black shoes that gave off the muted shine of leather, attached to trousers of the same color. His head was too heavy to lift more than an inch from the tile, but it was enough to peel his cheek away. It landed with a distant thud. Adam felt drained.

“Hello, gorgeous.”

The familiar voice came from above him this time, but his eyes were already fluttering closed. Fabric shifted nearby and strong arms snaked around him. He was brought up from the tile to a broad chest that radiated a soothing warmth. It took a moment, and as improbable as it seemed, the connection was made. This was Nigel. His friend.

Adam made a fussy sound into the clean fabric he found himself burrowing into. “You bit me. Friends don’t bite each other.” They were moving. He opened his eyes in time to spot the mess he’d left on the floor. Nigel stepped carefully over the spilt macaroni and cheese that had started the whole episode. The panic that had seized him seemed so far away then. Adam closed his hand in the dark suit jacket.

He was brought into the dark space of his bedroom and deposited into cool bedsheets. A warm hand closed over his own where it was still clutched in Nigel’s suit. His face and shoulders were cloaked in shadow. Adam could make out a stark browbone and streaks of silvering hair. The man took a seat beside him and placed a hand in his curls. “What has you so upset, hm?”

Adam’s eyes were closed again and he shifted wearily. “My dad… My dad died today.”

“Is that why there’s pasta on the kitchen floor?”

“I slipped. I got home and it was time for lunch. I tried making it, but my hands wouldn’t stop shaking, and then I had a panic attack and— “

“You were scared.” It was more of a statement than a question. A dark curl was tugged straight and released.

“I was very, very scared,” he agreed in a rush of breath. The hand still in his own squeezed his fingers. “Will you turn on the projector? Just there, on the bedside table.”

There was a pause. The hand in his hair left to reach away. With a subtle click, the milky way filled the room. The stars turned slowly, illuminating the walls with specks of light. Some fell over Nigel, revealing striking cheekbones, a square jaw, and a pair of lips. He looked older than Adam by at least a decade. His skin was creased in places, smooth in others. Dark, deep

set eyes were staring at him. Adam's gaze skittered away. He drew his wounded right hand back to stare at his palm.

To his own surprise, there wasn't a wound at all. Silver lines glimmered faintly in the dim light. It was hard to make out their shape in its entirety.

"It still hurts," he complained softly.

Nigel snared his wrist with purpose and brought the hand to his face. Adam could feel a hot, wet tongue gliding over his palm and a similar heat simmered in his belly. Those dark eyes were still fixated on him. It was downright possessive, that look. Adam squirmed and tried to yank his hand away. Nigel held on tight. It was only after emitting a rather embarrassing mewl that the man released him. He stood from the bed and bent to take Adam's shoes from his feet, setting them beside the door.

"Get some rest."

"It's not time for sleep," he protested weakly.

"Get some rest," came the reply. "I'll clean up the mess in the kitchen."

Adam had very few objections to that. The thought of his macaroni mess bothered him. It would calm him to know that the issue was resolved. His lids felt heavy and closed on their own. He drifted for however long it took Nigel to clean the kitchen and turn off the stove. His new friend returned, jacket missing and sleeves pushed to the elbows. He placed a glass of water by the projector and toed his leather shoes off at the door, nudging them to sit neatly beside Adam's.

The young man could feel the mattress dip with added weight and reached lazily for the man who had gathered him up from the kitchen floor. He was getting used to the feeling of those rough hands on him, calloused and warm, sliding along his arms and shoulders. In his hair. The man was bent over him from where he sat, his face once again sunk into shadow. He was silent only for a moment longer.

Adam could hear his lips part. "Why would someone so good," he breathed, teeth clicking, "summon a thing like me?"

The boy had no answer for him.

They ended up together in the stars, sprawled lazily in a tangle over mussed sheets. Chest to back, Nigel looked to the head of curls pillowed on his shoulder. His free arm was draped heavily across Adam's waist. He could feel the burn of the seal at the side of his neck. It was an airtight bond between them. He spent the night with his eyes open, watching over the precious creature who mumbled in his sleep, fingers twitching idly over Nigel's skin.

End Notes

Ayyy I don't know where to go from here
But if any of y'all want to draw me Nigel's seal, that would be rad. Cuz I have no idea what it would look like.
Tell me if you want more.
My Tumblr (it's new) is sawscalesandstags

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!